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NPO " Vector "
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Prof. Joshua LEDERBERG,
Chair
Working Group on Biological
Weapons Control
Washington, D.C. 20418, USA

Dear Prof. Lederberg,

On August, 11, 1993 within the frames of IX International Virological Congress in Glasgow the discussion is planned concerning the issue of eradication of the remaining variola (smallpox) virus collections which are maintained in WHO Collaborating Centers on Smallpox and Related Infections in USA and Russia. It is declared that the fact of complete eradication of both the viable viral strains and even the cloned genomic fragments would mean the complete deliverance of mankind from this most dangerous pathogen.

We are deeply worried by this decision and appeal to you with our considerations on the issue. Considering our information, please, keep in mind the unparalleled character of the action which is to eradicate the "extinguishing species" as well as the irreversible loss of additional information concerning the viruses for the future generations of scientists. It should be noted that only a few typical variola strains are planned to be sequenced and studied before the eradication of variola strains collections which include several hundreds of strains.

Being the specialists in the field of virology, molecular biology and molecular evolution we are sure that eradication of the collections will cause irretrievable damage to the comprehension of evolution and structural and functional regularities of orthopoxviruses genomic organization.

We ask you, dear colleague, to support our position and to inform us about your opinion. We would greatly appreciate receiving a letter with your opinion by fax (383-2-328-831) or via E-mail (vector@vector.nsk.su). Our conventional post service is unfortunately unreliable. We would be very grateful to you if you send the copy of your letter to the Chairman of the Roundtable at the International Congress in Glasgow Dr. Yuri Ghendon.

Thank you very much in advance.
I am looking forward to your reply.

With best wishes,
Yours sincerely,



Lev S. Sandakhchiev,
Prof., General Director
of NPO "Vector"